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Virtual reality creates real jobs for Boeing

'Manufacturing' center to add 30-60 positions

BY KENT MALLETT • ADVOCATE REPORTER • SEPTEMBER 11, 2008

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HEATH -- Boeing's new Virtual Manufacturing Center not only provides a detailed three-dimensional model of yet-to-be created products, but it also shows how to build them.

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Employees at the company's Guidance Repair Center on the Central Ohio Aerospace and Technology Center campus will watch through 3-D glasses on a huge video screen how to assemble a product only in the design phase.

The precise computerized images use physics to demonstrate the assembly process, down to details such as which screw or bolt to attach first. The information in Heath will be used at Boeing sites across the country.

The defense contractor showed off the center's capability to government and business leaders Wednesday, beginning with a virtual ribbon-cutting, virtual fly-in from above the site and virtual walk-through of the facility, with precise re-

creations of every detail in the building.

The \$1.2 million center will bring 30 to 60 new jobs to the Heath facility within 12 to 18 months. It will speed up design and production, and cut costs and training time.

"Implementing virtual manufacturing seems to be, on the surface, an overwhelming task, but we've taken the first baby steps," said Mike Emmelhainz, director for the Guidance Repair Center. "We're actually going to see a product we'll start building the first quarter of next year.

"It is a special day for us here at the Boeing site in Heath, Ohio. The capability is going to pay dividends well into the future."

The detailed three-dimensional modeling of products at the Heath facility will be shared with Boeing's design centers in other parts of the country.

"It's really about being able to enhance communications and the flow of seamless communications across the country and around the globe," said Nan Bouchard, Boeing's C3 Network vice president.

Rick Platt, executive director of the Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority, manager of COATC, said he hopes the virtual manufacturing center becomes a mecca for the Boeing supplier network. Boeing does more than \$6 billion of business in Ohio and surrounding states through almost 2,000 suppliers.

Platt seemed to express the view of many before the unveiling of the new facility.

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Though blurry to the naked eye, special glasses allow viewers to see three-dimensional objects projected onto a large screen in the new virtual manufacturing center at Boeing. (Michael Lehmkuhle, The Advocate)

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"I'm so excited to see how this thing works," Platt said. "We won't understand it, but we'll see how it works."

The three-dimensional capability also can place the products onto the manufacturing floor, recreating actual work stations and positioning of workers to build the product.

"We can play out what-if scenarios in the 3-D environment," said Mike Murasky, operations manager at the Heath facility. "We can see ergonomics and how employees can do the building."

Those on hand for the opening included State Rep. Jay Hottinger, R-Newark, County Commissioners Tim Bubb and Mark Van Buren, Heath city officials, the mayors of Newark and Heath, company leaders, and 90-year-old Wally Horton, the base's former technical director who helped found and later save the former Newark Air Force Base.

"Until you see it, you can't appreciate the power of 3-D, and visualize things that don't exist," Bubb said. "It's kind of a whole new world. These investments will pay dividends for a generation."

The long-term effects of such a facility could be dramatic, Heath Mayor Richard Waugh said.

"The state Department of Development is looking to cluster industries and we have some other similar industries," Waugh said. "Success breeds success and by having successful, innovative companies, that's where everybody will want to be. It helps attract more of the same."

The three-dimensional technology has been used by companies such as Honda and Toyota to cut costs and speed up production.

"We've got a lot of opportunities out there," Emmelhainz said. "This is really the tip of the iceberg. We've just scratched the surface. We're learning every day."

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gscballer wrote:

Good job guys- I know you put a lot of hard work into this. This will not only create jobs for those running the virtual manufacturing center, but getting more contracts/work in here will create more jobs for the technicians/support people!

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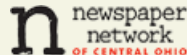
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